A Great College Year

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THE college year, just ended, has emphasized and embodied certain great or even unique elements of the higher education.

The year has proved the depth of the interest of the American people in their colleges and universities. The place and function, the rights and the duties, the responsibilities and the forces of the higher education have been under constant discussion. The usefulness or the uselessness of the higher education, the general and special functions of the college professor, the freedom of speech allowed within academic walls, the place of religion as a means of forming character, the honesty in the makeup of athletic teams, the diversity of education given in different institutions, the increase and the limitation of the number of students, these and many other questions quite as vital and fundamental have been debated in the newspapers, in public forum and private club, as well as in the meetings of faculties and bodies of trustees. The university no longer represents a fugitive and cloistered institution.

Concerned with Problem Of Flood of Students

The increase in the number of students and the probable continuation of the increase for at least two or three years more is still a concern to college administrators. Prof. Corwin of Yale has said: "The size of the present freshman class is of itself not especially significant, or better, it has its proper significance only when coupled with the fact that the scholarship requirements for admission were never so rigidly enforced as this year. In spite, therefore, of the most rigid limitations we have the largest freshman class in the history of the university. The size of the present freshman class, while much smaller than that admitted to many institutions, has given pause to many Yale men, both faculty and alumni, for if the present ratio of increase should continue the physical equipment of the university would soon be overtaxed, and, what is more important to many minds, the question would soon arise as to whether teaching may not become less effective and the other essential influence of college life less potent if the size of the entering classes should be greatly increased beyond that of the one entering college this year."

Prof. Brush of the Southern branch of the University of California in a personal note says that even this branch is preparing for an enrollment of no less than 6,000 students in the next two or three years. The colleges, and especially the State universities, are receiving numbers far in excess of their means of education. The American people apparently are obsessed with the idea of going to college. It is one of the most hopeful of all the signs and of all the auguries of the future of the American nation and of the nations. For the vastness of this increase is not limited to America.

As a part of the problem of the increase of numbers emerges the question of the methods of limitation of numbers. For certain colleges are determined that the quality of the education shall, so far as it is possible, not be impaired. This problem is easier for the privately endowed institutions than for the more public. For, according to the law in certain commonwealths, the State universities are obliged to receive every student who comes bearing a diploma of a first grade high school. The methods of limitation used differ in different institutions.

Vassar's Limit of 1,000 Not Easy to Copy

Vassar was one of the first to lay down an absolute limit. Its limit is 1,000 students. The late President Taylor, beloved and honored, approved of such a limitation, declaring also that, if more than 1,000 students wished to come to Vassar, the method of satisfaction lay in the founding of a second Vassar College. But other institutions are adopting other methods. Princeton indicated a few months ago its method. It has declared: "The method of restricting enrollment has been under consideration by the university authorities ever since it was finally decided last year that such limitation was necessary. The policy of the university in regard to this measure is that it shall not receive more students than can be adequately accommodated and properly taught, a number which reaches approximately 2,000 with the present resources.

"The result of the college entrance examinations will still be of primary importance. In addition to taking these examinations, candidates for admission will be required to file certificates of good character and statements signed by the principals of their school, together with their personal record.

"Besides considering the result of the entrance examinations and the statement of the candidate's record, the committee on admissions is to be guided by the following further provisions: Candidates recommended for scholarships shall be admitted, and candidates whose records show unusual promise, seriousness of purpose, or achievement under difficulty shall receive particular consideration."

These Are the Ways Dartmouth Keeps Down

The president of Dartmouth has indicated, at considerable length, in a recent address, the methods pursued by that college. Among the methods which he names are:

"Dartmouth College is a historic colonial college in the New England north country. Its graduates in some cases represent successive generations, and the college wishes to preserve within its body the atmosphere and the influence of these men.

"Likewise, it wishes to preserve the factor of geographical distribution. Since in the natural course of things it has been found that the men who come from the long distances are likely to average higher in initiative and determination, and since for the sake of the widest possible contacts it is desired to interpose no obstacles that make it difficult for these men removed from intimate touch with the college to come to Dartmouth, we have provided for the time being that all applications of men scholastically prepared from west of the Mississippi River and south of the Mason and Dixon line shall be accepted.

"Complementary to this, we are likewise expecting to take the entire group of those qualified who apply from New Hampshire, since New Hampshire is the home State of the college and since its men are in a particular sense men of the Dartmouth neighborhood.

Finally, there is one added provision in regard to which there has perhaps been more curiosity than in regard to anything else connected with the project, namely, that attention shall be given to the vocational background of the homes from which the students come. This provision is designed again to break up any tendency toward a standardized group and to insure that the college shall have not only the sons of professional men but the sons of farmers, while at the same time it is to be insisted that we do not sacrifice that group of serious minded men who, under the necessity of earning their own way, seek help from the college in the form of scholarships."*

What Right Has a College To Limit Its Students?

The consideration of the methods of limitations brings to view the question of the *right* of the college to limit its members. Such a question has been seriously asked, and in asking this question of the right it has been said "the eventual remedy is, of course, more colleges. For immediate remedy one can only hope that a change of heart, of which there are signs on the far horizon, may speedily overtake the governing bodies of the smaller colleges, that they may come to feel it their duty to expand, not indeed as fast as they comfortably can, but, literally, 'till it hurts.'"†

The increase in numbers has gone on with an increase in the fees of different colleges. The amount received from fees for instruction still represents about one-half or one-third of the cost of education to the individual institution. The question is still under discussion regarding a yet further increase on the part of private colleges. The question is asked with greater frequency and stronger emphasis, Why should not the student pay the entire cost of his education? Linked with the question is usually the declaration that those who are not able to pay the large fee should go to the tuitionless State university. There is also usually a further declaration made that the amount of the aid funds should be vastly increased in order that men poor in purse may not be kept out. The problem is indeed most complex, deserving more adequate research and a deeper study than has yet been given to it. As a minor element it may be added that the public institutions of each State are inclined to make a large increase in the fees of students coming to them from beyond their borders. For instance, the State Agricultural College of Massachusetts has increased its fees to such students threefold, or to $180 each year.

Education Not Improving, But Deteriorating

The education which the colleges and universities are offering is surely not improving in quality. If anything it is rather deteriorating. President Sills of Bowdoin College has recently said that "thoroughness of instruction" and "thoroughness of learning" are the primary needs. College authorities are inclined to represent that the completion of courses, or the gaining of a certain number of points, is education. Such a condition gives superficiality in both learning and thinking. He adds:

"The greatest trouble with American education is lack of thoroughness. As a nation we are all too content with getting by, with being satisfied with the average, with failing to strive after excellence. This attitude is reflected in many ways in our education. In school and in college we teach too many things; we spread out our instruction very thinly. There is perhaps more excuse for the school, for it thus keeps many pupils through its various programs that it would otherwise lose. Yet education suffers in consequence. The colleges offer too many courses and do so very largely for advertising purposes. We college people have developed the department idea so fully that the number of courses offered is almost funny and tends to detract from thorough work."

The fact is that the severer studies, studies which necessitate hard thinking, are not the favorite studies. English, the Romance languages, descriptive courses in art, possess advantages, diverse and rich. The educational value of a course depends quite as much upon the method of teaching and the personality of the teacher as upon the content of the subject. One may, or may not, adapt Kelvin's remark about the value of Greek as a preparation for the study of physics. But one is certainly justified in affirming that certain of the most popular studies in the curricula of the colleges are not the most vigorous and forceful powers for the making of mind.

As Schopenhauer has said: "The abolition of Latin as the universal language of learned men, together with the rise of that provincialism which attaches to national literatures, has been a real misfortune for the cause of knowledge in Europe. For it was chiefly through the medium of the Latin language that a learned public existed in Europe at all—a public to which every book as it came out directly appealed. The number of minds in the whole of Europe that are capable of thinking and judging is small as it is; but when the audience is broken up and severed by differences of language the good these minds can do is very much weakened."

"In learning a language the chief difficulty consists in making acquaintance with every idea which it expresses, even though it should use words for which there is no exact equivalent in the mother tongue, and this often happens. In learning a new language a man has, as it were, to mark out in his mind the boundaries of quite new spheres of ideas, with the result that spheres of ideas arise where none were before. Thus he not only learns words, he gains ideas, too."

Worth of Tests Not Yet Fully Determined

In the program of the relative values of the different studies the worth of tests has been much discussed. Such tests in education are one of the results of tests made in the enrollment of recruits in the wartime regiments. The increase in the number of men and women desiring to enter college has also promoted the use of examinations of some sort in order to exclude or to eliminate the unfit. Tests and examinations have also claimed the general attention through the diverse lists of questions which Mr. Edison has set forth for college and other folk to answer. These tests have been usually recognized as tests of information and of information only. This fact has led the people to recognize the fundamental difference between education for power and education for knowledge. Recently, however, Mr. Edison has put forth a series of questions much superior to his earlier lists, which call for an exercise of qualities and elements of the reason, and not of the qualities and elements of the memory only.

Year Marked by Drives For Endowment

The year has also been marked by the continuation of campaigns for endowment. The necessity of increased income for colleges still continues. A great share of the enlarged income is appropriated to the salaries of the teaching staff. Even without the augmented cost of living the increase in the professional stipend was, and is, most proper. With this augmented cost the propriety of the increase in stipend becomes a necessity. A republican democracy cannot under ordinary conditions pay a too large salary to its teachers or its clergymen. To clergymen and to teachers a proper salary is never a cause of entrance into the calling. But it is a condition, a condition which is to be made, and to be made freely and generously. Adequacy of income is a prerequisite for the maintenance of the personal standards in these callings. The maintenance of the personal standards in these callings is a prerequisite for the maintenance of the standards of the civil state and of society.

These appeals for funds for endowment have been made to three types of constituents: (1) the public, (2) the graduates of the individual colleges (3) the educational boards. The appeal made to the graduates and to the educational boards is, on the whole, a new appeal. To it the graduates have responded gloriously. The colleges have been inclined to neglect their graduate sons and daughters. Perhaps also these graduate sons and daughters have been a little inclined to neglect Alma Mater. But, on general grounds, the colleges are now more than ever eager to cultivate the fruitful field of the graduate. Dartmouth has lately instituted a course of lectures on the theme of "Being a Graduate." The colleges, moreover, have been inclined to emphasize the fact that the student has never paid but a small share of the cost of his education. Of Williams it is said that a graduate of the class of 1880 now owes the college the sum of more than $4,000. Of course it is possible to urge the matter of the exact payment too far. The very term Alma Mater represents a certain condition which cannot be interpreted or measured in terms of dollars. Appreciation, loyalty, love, are the principal notes in the college song!

The boards, too, especially those founded by Mr. Rockefeller, have continued their generous appropriations. These appropriations are given, as a rule, under a condition or conditions. The chief condition represents a gift of one-third or one-fourth of the entire amount desired to be secured if the other two-thirds or three-fourths be properly promised. The money thus appropriated by the General Education Board or by the Rockefeller Foundation, necessary or at least valuable in many cases for getting the entire amount desired, has served as a direct incentive for carrying forward campaigns to happy conclusions. The appropriations thus made by all the foundations has been marked by discrimination and discretion as well as by generosity. The beneficences borne to the community through the foundations established by the wisdom and out of the wealth of Andrew Carnegie and of John D. Rockefeller and of others deserve and should receive warmest commendation of this and of every nation. The General Education Board since its incorporation in 1903 has given about $50,000,000 to 207 institutions. The perils of such forces and foundations have on most cases been wisely avoided. Perils will emerge also in the future, but the future can be trusted these perils also to eliminate.

There Have Been Few Restraints of Academic Freedom

The year has also been characterized by a few, and only a few, cases of what is known as the restraint of academic freedom. The people seem peculiarly sensitive to any such restraint. This sensitiveness as it touches the colleges is apparently a development of the sensitiveness of the whole body of citizens, touching their general love of liberty. Such sensitiveness in the college world is, of course, most fitting. But, in the academic relation, the development of extremes in sentiment, both for and against, seems peculiarly easy. Recently a college president is reported to have said: "Academic freedom is an academic delusion and does not exist outside the brains of visionary idealists. . . . Public educational institutions always must be conservative places, and discussions of new projects will be more hampered there than outside their walls." The general truth, however, seems to be:

"(a) The college may not place any restraint upon the teacher's freedom in investigation, unless restriction upon the amount of time devoted to it becomes necessary in order to prevent undue interference with the teaching which is the pri-

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*The proceedings of the eighth annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges, Bulletin of March, 1922. "Limitation of Enrollment in Colleges," by President Hopkins, Dartmouth College. Pages 159 30.

†The New York *Times*, March 12, 1922. "Democracy of Education," by Stuart Robertson.